

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 161609Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2677

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 6010

EXDIS

FOR M, EUR/EX, EUR/SOV, M/MED, DG ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3,4

TAGS: ASEC, US, UR

SUBJECT: MOSCOW SIGNAL

1. DAVE MASON OF AP WAS IN TO SEE ME TODAY AND ASKED ABOUT REPORTS THAT WHITE CELL BLOODCOUNTS OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN UNUSUALLY HIGH. I TOLD HIM THAT BLOOD TESTS HAD BEEN TAKEN DURING A PERIOD WHEN THERE WAS A FLU EPIDEMIC IN MOSCOW AND THAT ALL THOSE WHO HAD EITHER RECENTLY SUFFERED FROM THE FLU OR WHO WERE SUFFERING FROM IT AT THAT TIME WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE A HIGH BLOODCOUNT. IN ADDITION, A SERIOUS OUTBREAK OF GIARDIASIS LAMBLIA IS NOW OCCURRING IN MOSCOW AND THOSE SUFFERING FROM, OR EXPOSED TO, THIS DISEASE WOULD ALSO HAVE HIGH WHITE BLOODCOUNTS (SEE MOSCOW 5823). I SAID FURTHER THAT MANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAD TESTED HIGH LIVE OUTSIDE THE EMBASSY AND HAD NEVER BEEN EXPOSED TO ANY FORM OF MICROWAVE RADIATION. IT WAS THEREFORE SIMPLY TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER THE DATA COLLECTED FROM THE BLOOD TESTS WERE MEANINGFUL. FURTHERMORE, I SAID, STORIES OF HIGH BLOODCOUNT MIGHT NEEDLESSLY ALARM RELATIVES OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL IN THE STATES AS WELL AS HAVE AN UNFORTUNATE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. MASON SEEMED TO ACCEPT MY EXPLANATION. HE SAID HE WOULD PROBABLY BE WRITING A STORY ON THE RADIATION, BASED ON RECENT DISCUSSIONS HE HAS HAD WITH VARIOUS (UNNAMED) PEOPLE, BUT THAT HE WOULD LEAVE OUT OR AT LEAST DOWNPLAY THE BLOODCOUNT ANGLE.

2. IT IS NO SECRET AMONG EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND DEPENDENTS THAT
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MANY BLOOD TESTS ARE SHOWING ELEVATED WHITE BLOOD CELL AND/OR

HIGH LYMPHOCYTE COUNTS. (IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SOONER OR LATER THE STORY WILL GET IN THE PAPERS IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER). WHAT-EVER THE CAUSE, IT IS AN ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF WORRY AND TENSION. IN THIS CONTEXT, HEMENWAY'S IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS (STATE 085714) TEND TO COMPOUND THE PROBLEM. THE LOCAL AFSA REP HAS PREPARED A FOUR PAGE CABLE DISASSOCIATING THE LOCAL AFSA CHAPTER FROM HEMENWAY'S COMMENTS. THE LOCAL REP IS HOLDING THE CABLE IN ORDER TO GIVE SOV DIRECTOR MARK GARRISON A CHANCE TO COMMENT ON IT AFTER HE ARRIVES HERE ON APRIL 18. THE CABLE STATES THAT "IN VIEW OF CONTENTS OF HEMENWAY REPORT THE NEED FOR EXTENSIVE UNCLASSIFIED REPORT ON ENTIRE MATTER BY THE DEPARTMENT IS MORE URGENTLY NEEDED THAN BEFORE".

3. FROM THE EMBASSY'S POINT OF VIEW AN UNCLASSIFIED BRIEFING PAPER APPEARS TO BE MORE ESSENTIAL THAN EVER TO ALLY FEARS, WHICH CONTINUE TO BE EXPRESSED, WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT THERE ARE MANY COMPLICATING FACTORS, WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT A FORTHRIGHT, COMPREHENSIVE UNCLASSIFIED BRIEFING PAPER WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARD DISCREDITING RUMORS, HALF-TRUTHS AND OUTRIGHT MISSTATEMENTS OF FACTS. BREMENT

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